

# Ethics and Copyright Reminders

*Create art that originates with you!  
Create what you know or learn first-hand.  
Use your own photos, sketches, live-sources.*

---

As artists enter into a new level of personal development, they should refresh their understanding of copyright, ethics and how they apply it to the creation of artwork.

Art shows or hanging venues require original artwork. In brief: no work from magazine pages (in whole or bits and pieces), do not use another's photography published or otherwise to draw, paint or create from, no copying, emulating or painting "in the style of" another artist.

Use no famous person's image without permission unless it is more the artwork selling as a statement rather than the famous face. Moreover, if you use any person's face in your artwork, make sure you have a simple, signed release to display and sell the artworks derived from it. (You may want to compensate the model with a print of the artwork).

**As a rule of thumb, if you didn't see the item or scene in person, you are probably infringing on copyright.**

An individual artist as well as the organization they are affiliated with can be held accountable in many ways if they display copied/stolen works, heavily emulated works or images of famous faces, etc.

First and foremost, it hurts the artist whose imagery or style was stolen. It can damage the offending artist's credibility as a professional and it may damage the group they are affiliated with. Mostly, it is against legal and moral ethics.

If you are using a source and are in doubt, please err on the side of safety for the sake of the organization as well as your own reputation. Some day, this same law and code of ethics may protect your artwork in the same way.

Play by the "do unto others..." rule. Especially when you are making a profit from the image, you must be very careful that it is completely yours in every way.

Using classroom setups, other people's photos, copying the masters, etc. is for practice and for honing our skills... these

are not the end-products of an artist. Organizations welcome growing artists and strive to nurture through critique, discussion, classes and workshops.

**We all learn from example but then must breakaway and develop our own path.**

An artist or arts organization must not have any copyright infringement in any way, in any venue, no matter how small. Someone WILL notice.

**Please do not follow the erroneous logic that "if you change five or seven elements in a painting or photo then it is yours."**

That is excuse-making for ripping off another person's art. Actually, if you are going to that much effort, think how much more satisfying it would be if you simply set up your own still life or found a similar scene in nature!

For instance if I change a few or many words in a Shakespearean sonnet, it will NEVER make it MINE. I can change the word "rose" to "daisy" and the word "doze" to "lazy" but who cares... the underlying structure (where the real creativity and genius rests) will always belie my claim to it.

In Fine-Art Shows and most venues, you may not enter art where you did not set up the subject, and/or where the instructor painted on your canvas or where the piece is not entirely created by your own thought process and hand.

You may not use any source other than your own, with or without permission. Fine-Art Shows require artwork that is completely original by you beginning with its concept through to the last brushstroke (or spin of the potters-wheel, or click of the shutter, etc).

ASK FIRST, but in some hanging or display venues the artist may display and sell pieces from another source or photo IF the author of that source has given written permission and you identify the author of the original source material on the artist ID card.

Ask first, but in some venues you may hang and sell work created in a classroom with instruction as long as the subject is not from a copyrighted source.

One final point I would like to touch on in ethics and that is truth in labeling. We artists must label our artwork truthfully and accurately as to what the medium is.

The public is not always savvy on many new processes and while they may purchase a few misidentified pieces by mistake; this practice will do more harm than good to you and your organization in the long run. Word of mouth is a very strong tool.

In example: If you used pen and ink and watercolor with maybe a touch of gouache, then label it in mixed media on the ID card. If you started the project with a photo and worked it with a computer paint program until it looked like an oil painting, make sure you label it as a "digital painting with photo base" and if desired, list the camera and software used. If you started with a photo on paper or canvas and painted on top of it with oil paint or special photo-paint (or whatever), label it as an oil-color enhanced photo. And so on.

What I am saying in all of this is be clear/not clever, in your labeling. Let the public purchase your work for what it is. So when they mature in their knowledge, they don't rue the day they met you. If you are unsure what you should put on the label for your medium, ask someone in charge.

Word to the wise – if a judge juries in artwork via photos and then upon viewing the actual artwork notes that a piece was misrepresented by accident or by plan, the judge has the right to pull it from the show along with any ribbons or prizes.

Cynthia (CJ) Rider

